

Waitress

About a year before she will become my mother Dolly stands on sturdy legs, aching hips pressed against the edge of the shiny metal counter at Tully's Diner. Thirty-nine and pale, sorting silverware, her quick fingers separate forks from spoons from knives in the last hour of her workday. Dark strands of damp hair unfurl on her forehead. Her eyes move like lazy darts across the room, through the big picture window and all the way to the horizon pierced by tall stacks streaming yellow-green smoke forever. Her eyes go through the sky while flies buzz and bounce against both sides of the screen door, dying to get in or dying to get out.

In five or ten minutes she will pour another round of coffee for the elderly couple hunched in a corner booth. They will drag slim french-fries through thin puddles of ketchup, will not look up at her, not nod, not say anything at all to her. She will seem to smile as she places their bill on the table, as she hears the small ting of the bell above the screen door, the swinging screen door. She will turn to discover her new dark Indian lover, turn to discover the man who will throw his head back, laugh like a horse, speak with a voice like the shuffling of wings. She will and she will and then she will not take her eyes away from his devilish face, the blade of his grin. She will not ever really take her eyes away forever. She will give herself to him over and over again. They will accidentally make me, make chaos. And no matter how sturdy she stands or how long she waits, I will not be unborn. And God, well, God will never come down from his machine.

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